Friends:
A ONE-ACT PLAY BY JULES FEIFFER
Friends was part of an evening of dialogue, scenes and narrative entitled Jules’ Blues, presented at the Vineyard Playhouse in Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts on August 10 and 11, 1998. The roles of Fran and Ted were performed by Polly Draper and Robert Brustein.

TED (MIDDLE-AGED MAN)
Fran and I have so many friends—

FRAN (MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN)
—whom we love

TED
Whom we love, and who represent a significant part of our lives.

FRAN
Truly significant.

TED
And it's a joy.

FRAN
We are joyful.

TED
And thankful for these friendships.

FRAN
And grateful. (pause)
That we are blessed with so many friends.

TED
Who expect a lot—

FRAN
Over the years—

TED
Over the years, they've come to expect—

FRAN
A lot.

TED
A lot of giving—

FRAN
Which we want to do.

TED
Very much need to do.

FRAN
Not for them, not just for them. For ourselves.
Ted: We get as much as we give.

Fran: Oh?

Ted: (proving his point) They love us.

Fran: They depend on us.

Ted: Isn’t that what friendship’s all about?

Fran: In a way that they don’t depend on their other friends.

Ted: They don’t have other friends.

Fran: Why is that?

Ted: Oh, they have some friends.

Fran: Of course. What kind of friends would they be if they didn’t have other friends? Not the kind of friends I’d want.

Ted: But no one is as close—

Fran: No one gives, who think it’s their duty to give—

Ted: As much as Fran and I—

Fran: And when we give to one friend, when we spend time, or go out for an evening, or go away on a trip—

Ted: God help us if one of our other friends find out.

Fran: I don’t know why—

Ted: I will never know why—

Fran: They get jealous.

Ted: They want us for themselves.

Fran: They expect us to be there, even when we’re on holiday.

Ted: “Where were you?” they demand.

Fran: “You weren’t there when I had plans, tickets to Forest Hills.”

Ted: “Where were you?”

Fran: It can get tense.

Ted: Why should we feel guilty?
TED

Our children weren't that needy.

FRAN

I don't mean our children.

TED

Of course not. They were independent from day one.

FRAN

They wouldn't listen.

TED

They didn't care.

FRAN

You couldn't say anything to them without having it thrown back in your face.

TED

"You didn't!"

FRAN

"You weren't!"

TED

"You're never there!"

FRAN

When we were there.

TED

"You didn't try!"

FRAN

"You're never there and you don't try!"

TED

After a while, you stop trying.

FRAN

Because we are there most of the time.

TED

We can't be there every second of the day and night. We have jobs, for Christ's sake!

FRAN

We can't fit in everyone all the time—

TED

They wouldn't appreciate it anyway.

FRAN

The problem is—if they only liked each other. They gossip about each other.

TED

We discourage it.

FRAN

But, let's face it, dishing is an element of friendship, don't you think?

TED

What do they say about us behind our backs?

FRAN

Oh, I don't think—I'd rather not know.

TED

It's not fair, it's really not.

FRAN

(miffed)

They're as needy as children.
FRAN
The sheer ingratitude.
TED
Who can live with it?
FRAN
"You always have time for your friends—"
TED
A lie. A bald-faced lie!
FRAN
We had time for them. We made time for them.
TED
So much time.
FRAN
But it was never enough.
TED
They wanted to devour us.
FRAN
Till there was nothing left.
TED
Their anger…
(shudders)
our guilt.
FRAN
I have nothing to feel guilty about.
TED
Yes, you did.

(fast response)
You did too.
TED
No, I didn’t.
FRAN
No, I didn’t either.
TED
No…neither of us, really.
FRAN
The stress…the god-awful, relentless, never-ending stress…
TED
It’s better with them gone.
FRAN
I thought I’d miss them.
TED
What a pleasant surprise not to.
FRAN
It’s worked out fine.

(pause)
Really.
(long pause)
We have more time for our friends.
TED
Fran and I have so many friends.